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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ANKARA 000302

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2020  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MNUC](#) [MASS](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' FEBRUARY 18 MEETINGS WITH U/S  
SINIRLIOGLU

REF: ANKARA 263

Classified By: AMB James F. Jeffrey, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During February 18 "Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue" meetings in Ankara, Turkish MFA Undersecretary Sinirlioglu:

- Appealed for "simultaneity" between Armenian Protocols ratification and the Minsk Process;
- Registered increasing GoT dissatisfaction with Iraqi PM Malaki;
- Expressed hope USF-I CG Odierno's engagement would elicit substantive cooperation from the KRG against the terrorist PKK;
- Urged higher profile USG involvement in the Cyprus reunification talks, and;
- Confirmed GoT interest in further dialogue on missile defense.

End Summary.

IRAN

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¶2. (C) Burns strongly urged Sinirlioglu to support action to convince the Iranian government it is on the wrong course. Sinirlioglu reaffirmed the GoT's opposition to a nuclear Iran; however, he registered fear about the collateral impact military action might have on Turkey and contended sanctions would unite Iranians behind the regime and harm the opposition. Burns acknowledged Turkey's exposure to the economic effects of sanctions as a neighbor to Iran, but reminded Sinirlioglu Turkish interests would suffer if Israel were to act militarily to forestall Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons or if Egypt and Saudi Arabia were to seek nuclear arsenals of their own. He said the international community's patience with Iran had been met with the Iranian refusal, since October, to work with the P5-plus-1, the clandestine enrichment facility near Qom and Tehran's recent

decision to enrich its low-enriched uranium to 20%. The IAEA's creative proposal to fabricate new fuel assemblies for the Tehran Research Reactor had stumbled on a technically unfeasible Iranian counter-offer for a simultaneous exchange in Iran of Iranian fuel for fuel assemblies. Carefully constructed sanctions, Burns argued, targeting the increasingly pervasive economic power of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, would convey the international community's unity and determination. "We'll keep the door open to engagement," he stressed. A visibly disheartened Sinirlioglu conceded a unified message is important. He acknowledged the countries of the region perceive Iran as a growing threat: "Alarm bells are ringing even in Damascus."

#### ARMENIA

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¶3. (C) Sinirlioglu appealed for "simultaneity" between Armenian Protocols ratification and the Minsk Process. He emphasized "a strong reaction" against the protocols among ruling party MPs had to be overcome before the government would hazard a ratification effort. He warned Congressional passage of an Armenian genocide resolution would "complicate" his government's domestic political calculations regarding ratification. He said if something acceptable to Azerbaijani President Aliyev can be found, then "we can move" the protocols forward. Sinirlioglu suggested Azerbaijan and Armenia's announcement of an agreed framework for Minsk Group progress would provide the GoT with the necessary political cover. Burns inquired about the prospect for progress on a natural gas deal between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Sinirlioglu implied

ANKARA 00000302 002 OF 005

Aliyev is holding an agreement hostage to Turkey's handling of the protocols: "He doesn't trust us."

#### IRAQ

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¶4. (C) Sinirlioglu registered the GoT's increasing dissatisfaction with PM Maliki and fear that he is tending "to get out of control." "He is preoccupied with his political survival;" nevertheless, Sinirlioglu continued, the GoT is in frequent contact with him. The MFA hosted Maliki advisors Sadiq al Rikabi and Tariq al Najmi to meetings 10 days prior. Sinirlioglu lamented Iran's efforts to influence the election. He noted Saudi Arabia is also "throwing around money" among the political parties in Iraq because it is unwilling to accept the inevitability of Shia dominance there. "We want a free, transparent and fair election," he said, "we need to forestall a deepening of the sectarian divide."

¶5. (C) After the March 7 elections, Sinirlioglu said, Turkey would initiate an effort to connect Iraqi gas fields to the Turkish grid via a 300 kilometer pipeline, costing USD 500 million. He asserted the pipeline could begin pumping within two years. He alleged Iranian opposition to the pipeline because most of Iraq's gas fields are in Kurdish and Sunni areas. Sinirlioglu advocated a second pipeline that would give Iraqi oil an alternative to the Gulf as a route to Europe once the country is able to meet its OPEC quota. He asserted the pipelines' construction would pull the several Iraqi communities together into a common project. The creation of new "common assets," he said, could be more important for its politically unifying effect than its economic impact.

¶6. (C) Sinirlioglu registered his appreciation for USF-I Commanding General Odierno's recent visit. He hoped for the early drafting of an action plan that would elicit more cooperation from the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) against the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leadership harboring in northern Iraq: "We want the KRG to understand that working with us is important."

## ISRAEL

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¶7. (C) Burns focused on Turkey's strained relationship with Israel. Sinirlioglu argued "the problem is not bilateral, but general." He attributed increasing regional country frustration with Israel to the stalled Peace Process, especially on the Palestinian track. He blamed the lack of progress on Israeli intransigence, which caused regional stake-holders to question Netanyahu's goals. He contended the "humanitarian situation in Gaza," which is not a punishment of Hamas, but of the Gazan people, fed Turkish popular anger against Israel. Even so, bilateral cooperation with Israel is continuing. Turkey is acquiring Israeli military equipment, notably Heron UAVs. Direct flights between the two countries are routine. Two-way trade is healthy, he said, tourism has dropped recently, but "will recover." Sinirlioglu described Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak's mid-January visit as "very good." He noted the MFA is exploring the possibility of arranging a meeting between the two prime ministers on the margins of an international gathering. Returning to a GoT obsession, he recalled the Turkey-brokered Syria-Israel proximity talks, "which were shattered by Cast Lead," Israel's December 2008 military operation in Gaza. Burns noted Syria places high value on Turkey's role as a mediator and repeated Senator Mitchell's statement that Turkey-brokered proximity talks can make an important contribution to the Peace Process.

ANKARA 00000302 003 OF 005

## SYRIA

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¶8. (C) Sinirlioglu contended Turkey's diplomatic efforts are beginning to pull Syria out of Iran's orbit. He said a shared hatred for Saddam had been the original impetus for their unlikely alliance. "Now, their interests are diverging." Once again pitching Israel-Syria proximity talks, Sinirlioglu contended Israel's acceptance of Turkey as a mediator could break Syria free of Tehran's influence and further isolate Iran.

## EU, CYPRUS and GREECE

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¶9. (C) Sinirlioglu said Turkey's EU accession is being obstructed by the politically motivated objections of several member states, notably France, Austria and Cyprus. He reserved special criticism for President Sarkozy. He accused France of changing the rules mid-game. He contended French opposition to Turkey's membership is "deepening the cultural divide" between Christian Europe and the Muslim world: "A wider audience is watching this."

¶10. (C) He regretted perceived Greek Cypriot complacency regarding the island's reunification talks: EU "membership makes them invulnerable." Greek Cypriots, he said, want the world to forget the progress achieved by the Annan Plan in ¶2004. They pretend relations between the island's two communities are an internal affair, even though, by treaty, it's been an international issue for 50 years. Talat's cross-voting proposal, Sinirlioglu continued, should have been a breakthrough, but the Greek Cypriots failed to react. Downer is frustrated, Sinirlioglu alleged, and so are the Turkish Cypriots. He implied the island's Turkish community would register its frustration by voting out Talat as TRNC "president" in April. He renewed Turkey's appeal for higher profile direct USG involvement in the negotiations.

¶11. (C) Sinirlioglu welcomed Greek PM Papandreu's belated response to Erdogan's October 30 letter seeking a frank new discussion of the two neighbors' several long-running disputes. He conceded Papandreu's delay is understandable in light of his likely preoccupation with Greece's acute financial crisis. Based on Papandreu's response,

Sinirlioglu said, Turkey expects to begin new talks with Greece soon.

AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN and INDIA  
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¶12. (C) Burns opened the discussion on Afghanistan with praise for Turkey's military, training and development contributions there. Sinirlioglu said Turkey had chosen to focus on three Afghan challenges: "the marriage of Wahhabism and Pashtun nationalism"; the chronic antagonism between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and; the country's security forces deficit. He said Turkey plans to address the first by ramping up its education programs in Afghanistan; the second by pursuing its trilateral Ankara Process, which sponsors meetings of senior Afghan and Pakistani ministerial and intelligence counterparts, and; the third by establishing a police training center in Kabul that aims for a throughput of 5160 trainees per year. Keying off the last point, AMB Tacan Ildem, who recently concluded an assignment as Turkey's NATO PERMREP, declared the EUPOL police training effort in Afghanistan a failure. He said the EU's criticism of Turkey's unwillingness to work directly with EUPOL is unjustified. He argued, since Turkey does not have a security agreement with the EU and is excluded from the

ANKARA 00000302 004 OF 005

European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), the GoT lacks a legal basis on which to cooperate with EUPOL. "We would like the EU to involve us not as a third country, but, in view of our accumulated rights," as a candidate for membership. He urged the USG not to coordinate bilateral agreements to support EU operations but, instead, to route all cooperation with the EU on security issues through NATO.

¶13. (C) Deputy Undersecretary for South Asian Affairs Engin Soysal led the discussion on Pakistan. He described the Ankara Process and the recent Turkey-sponsored Afghanistan Neighbors Summit as Turkish efforts to assert regional responsibility for South Asia's inter-linked problems. He said Turkey had not invited India to the neighbors summit in deference to Pakistani sensitivities; however, he claimed, Pakistan understands attempting to exclude India from the nascent South Asian regional structures would be a mistake. He reported Indian Prime Minister Singh had requested President Gul's assistance with Pakistan during the latter's visit to New Delhi the previous week. Acting on that request, Gul had phoned Pakistani President Zardari, who was skeptical of Indian intentions. Gul is planning to visit Pakistan later this year. Soysal said Iran is proposing a quadrilateral summit, which would include Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but that proposal had yet to generate enthusiasm.

¶14. (C) Soysal, Turkey's former ambassador to Pakistan, said the Pakistani military, though displeased with Zardari, remains unwilling to intervene; nevertheless, senior officers' patience may not be infinite. Zardari needs to increase the democratic legitimacy of parliament. Soysal offered. Nawaz Sharif has become a much more constructive player.

¶15. (C) Soysal urged a NATO training role in Pakistan. Picking up from Soysal, Tacan Ildem suggested NATO invite Pakistani military officers to courses at Oberammergau.

BOSNIA  
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¶16. (C) Sinirlioglu registered the GoT's determination to resist perceived EU efforts to exclude Turkey from the Balkans, particularly Bosnia. He identified effecting rapprochement between Bosnia and Serbia as Turkey's immediate diplomatic goal for the region. Towards that end, Sinirlioglu said, we convinced Haris Siladjdzic, who had been in Ankara the day before, to cease references to Serbian

"genocide." The United States and Turkey have "agreed to disagree" on the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Bosnia; nevertheless, "we value your involvement in the Balkans."

#### BILATERAL EUROPEAN RELATIONS, NATO

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¶17. (C) Burns inquired about Turkey's bilateral relations with Europe. Sinirlioglu briefly recapped Turkey's unhappiness with Sarkozy. He described his country's relationship with Austria as infected by the latter's ethnic prejudice. He complained Belgium and Denmark are reluctant to suppress terrorist PKK-affiliated organizations active in their countries. Tacan Ildem added that, as part of the 2009 POTUS-brokered deal that had overcome Turkish objections to the appointment of Anders Fogh Rasmussen as NATO Secretary General, Denmark had promised to clarify its legal requirements prerequisite to acceding to Turkey's request for the closure of Roj TV, a PKK mouthpiece. This still needed to be done, Ildem said.

¶18. (C) Picking up from Ildem, Sinirlioglu recalled the

ANKARA 00000302 005 OF 005

POTUS-brokered deal had included an understanding that a qualified Turk would be considered for Assistant Secretary General. Instead, he said, a German of unconvincing merit was selected. "We suspect a deal between Rasmussen and Merkel." Ildem complained high-level positions should be part of NATO reform: "We missed an opportunity with the selection of the Assistant Secretary General." Sinirlioglu added: "We let Rasmussen have Secretary General, because we trusted you."

#### MISSILE DEFENSE

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¶19. (C) Sinirlioglu inquired about Russia's reaction on missile defense. Burns said the Russians are much more relaxed towards the Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) and we hope to have more conversations on missile defense bilaterally and, eventually, within the NATO-Russia Council. Sinirlioglu recalled PM Erdogan's request in his recent meeting with SECDEF Gates that the Iranian threat not be highlighted to justify PAA.

¶20. (U) Participants:

Turkey

Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu  
Deputy Undersecretary Engin Soysal  
Ambassador Reha Keskintepe, Director General for the Americas  
Ambassador Tacan Ildem, Director General for International Security Affairs  
Ambassador Aydin Sezgin, Director General for Intelligence and Security Affairs  
Ebru Barat Gokdenizler, Deputy Director General for the Americas  
Serhat Aksent, Department Head, Americas

United States

Undersecretary William Burns  
Ambassador James Jeffrey  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Tina Kaidanow  
Bridget Brink, NSC  
Daniel O'Grady, Political Counselor  
Tamir Waser, P Staff  
Jeremiah Howard, Deputy Political Counselor - Notetaker

¶21. (U) Undersecretary Burns has cleared this cable.

Jeffrey

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